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**SUB-THEME (c):** Repositioning Institutions for the Challenges of Sustainable Development and Good Governance (II): The Role of Civil Society Institutions and NGOs

**TITLE: AFRICA INTO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: Re-evaluating the Role of Non-State Actors in Promoting and Implementing Sustainable Development and Good Governance**

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**Abstract**

As centuries go, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been remarkable age of material advancement and socio-political transformation. By any yardstick, people around the world have witnessed profound changes in their conditions of life. Yet, these impressive achievements stand in stark contrast to persistent poverty, striking inequities in the distribution of the benefits of development, and wide-scale social exclusion or marginalization. Despite unprecedented material progress in some countries, basic education, health care, housing, social safety nets, and social protection remain insufficient for the majority of the population.

As we gaze at the pink morning of this 4-year-old century, Africa seethes with anger and desperation: Today across the African continent, there has emerged a lopsided development and social dilemma: In our urban sectors, small islands of dazzling abundance exist side by side with a cheerless ocean of absolute poverty, destitution, homelessness, dehumanising unemployment, barbaric violence and environmental degradation, ethnic polarization and tension.

The conceptual argument of this paper is that poor economic and political governance not only bear causal responsibility for Africa's misery, but the nature, extent and enduring effect of their impacts, largely hinders the Africa's people's efforts to construct routes out of poverty since the quality of governance is as important as the quantity of development.

Civil society institutions and non-governmental organizations therefore have a particular responsibility for spearheading action and creating a positive framework to meet the challenge of sustainable development and good governance. The ideas of justice and equal opportunities, of equity for future generations through protecting the environment in which we live, of people coming out of poverty to share in Africa's bounty, of becoming integral members of society is an integral part of the equation in meeting the challenge of sustainable development and good governance. This must be deliberately forged and regularly fortified by the non-state actors.

## Introduction

The economies of sub-Saharan Africa have been in decline for a quarter of a century. The trend is all the more remarkable because it is exceptional: other regions that around 1980 were characterized by low per capita income -South and East Asia - have on average grown rapidly. Yet the decline is not merely relative. Africa is not just failing to converge with other regions, its decline is absolute: per capita incomes are significantly lower than they were a century ago. Nor has this decline been the result of a sudden, dated catastrophe across the continent, or a disastrous performance in a few countries. Rather, decline has been fairly continuous over the entire period. Africa has, as a result, become *the* development challenge. The essence of sustainable development therefore cannot be fully understood until we answer the question “why is Africa poor?”

This is a question which has elicited several answers. In trying to explain the failure of Africa to achieve economic and social development vis-à-vis the strong performance of East Asia, answers have often been sought either in policy, institutional and geographical shortcomings or in proxies such as physical, capital, deepening human capital accumulation and productivity growth, or in micro-economic technological and entrepreneurial behaviour. (UNIDO, 2004: 6)

There are those who believe Africa has no one to blame for its underdevelopment but itself - more specifically, its leaders (Economist, 2004:16). To yet others, Africa's poverty is traceable to the lopsided, state-led policies, which, “crowded out” the productive private sector, and subsidized public sector prodigality and waste.

But to some, the root cause of the grinding poverty is colonial exploitation (Rodney, 1995,). It is argued that the institutions for governance and resource-extraction that prevailed during colonial era in developing countries have been found to affect post-independence institutional quality and growth in variety of ways. For example, whether indirect rule and absence of colonial settlers facilitated the emergence of a cadre of trained natives, or, conversely, segregated public-service systems, limited native participation in government, are likely to have had different effects on post -

independence institutional quality. Similarly, colonial institutions that favoured the emergence of competitive political parties, independent judiciaries, and cabinet governments based on merit-recruited, politically neutral civil service, or a powerful presidential system wielding strong executive authority, are likely to have had different governance implications. While it is often difficult to quantify these factors, their influence on institution-building cannot be ignored (World Bank, 2000).

Dependency and Underdevelopment development theorists Dos Santos, (1966), Cardoso (1971), argue that colonialism subverted hitherto traditional structures, institutions and values or made them subservient to the economic and political needs of the imperial powers. It also retarded the development of an entrepreneurial class, as well as a middle class with skills and managerial capacity.

***“Over several decades since independence Africa’s underdevelopment and poverty has posed such a seemingly invincible challenge that stands in the way of the continent’s prosperity in our lifetime.”***



**Photo: courtesy of Daily Nation Newspaper, Nairobi.**

These two factors, together with the divisions caused by the Cold War, hampered the development of accountable governments across the continent, Mazrui (1989). Many African governments did not empower their peoples to embark on development initiatives to realise their creative potential. Today, the weak state remains a major constraint on sustainable development in a number of countries. Indeed, one of Africa's major challenges is to strengthen the capacity to govern and to develop long-term policies. At the same time, there is also the urgent need to implement far-reaching reforms and programmes in many African states, Nyong'o (2005).

### **Sustainable development: A Historical background**

The dawn of independence in Africa in the 1960s was greeted not only with much pomp and glory but also thought to herald a new epoch of further progress and prosperity. It was characterised by the international community's efforts to promote economic growth and to support national process that would create modern conditions in the countries of the Third World. Governments were pre-occupied with programmes for generating economic growth from the urban sectors that would trickle down to, as well as generate other social benefits especially for the poor.

In Kenya for instance, upon attainment of independence and self-governance in 1964, the new government released sessional paper no. 10 of 1965: *"African Socialism and its application to Planning in Kenya"*. GOK (1965). This ushered the way for the highly-vaunted and glitzy decorated model of "trickle-down". It is this model which was to dominate and inform Kenya's - as did many other sub-Saharan African countries' - development policy, planning and programming through out the 1960s and 1970s. According to this approach, capitalistic economic growth generated from the urban sectors was the unquestionable faith, the miracle tonic for all sickness in developing countries. It was believed to be the panacea of underdevelopment, whereby hunger, diseases and ignorance could not be overcome unless the industrial production of goods and services generated from the urban sector was greatly increased.

Invariably, these interventions at best, failed to provide the required impetus for development; at worst, tilted towards undermining growth in Africa. Instead, what Africa realised was development of underdevelopment; which is to say that, efforts which African governments have engaged since independence, with view to bringing about socio-economic development in their respective countries have accentuated the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and inequality.

Box 1.

**Africa's first presidents let down their nations.**

An overwhelming majority of Africa's independent heroes are hugely discredited lot that did the continent more harm than good during their tenure. What with the fact that the continents own yesteryears liberators having been given control of their respective countries became their foremost tormentors and to date their misdeeds still haunt the continent. The men who led Africa to independence threw all pretences aside and became foremost tribalists, plunders, dictators and overnight ideologues. They surrounded themselves with select elite and were far removed from the suffering common masses that they rode on their backs to victory.

The dawn of independence saw a crop of ambitious, well-educated and enlightened men ascending to the continents top seats. These luminaries were mistakenly thought to be capable of leading the continent to greater progress. Instead, by Africa's independence-winning luminaries and their predecessors ran their countries like personal fiefdoms and affected a personality cult that served to entrench their dictatorships. They took their countries to the brink of economic collapse by engaging in unnecessary projects which their countries did not need. They made their countries ideological guinea pigs through wholesale experiment with communism which eventually proved disastrous. If the nationalists' movements that assumed power did so on the basis of essentially democratic (and populist) platforms, their eventual rule was neither democratic nor populist. Power was concentrated in tiny, educated elite who quickly divorced themselves from the rest of the population. It eroded any accountability that the state may have had to the citizenry.

In Kenya, politicians have not minced their words in blaming Kenyatta for promoting tribalism and corruption in handling matters of the state by packing top posts of the state with his kinsmen, relatives and loyalists.

During the reigns of Banda in Malawi, Sekou Tore in Guinea and Macias Nguema in Equatorial Guinea, the state and by extension themselves were implicated in political murders that caused world-wide furore. Detention without trial was the most common method of silencing internal dissent. Maurice Yameogo of Burkina Faso did not have any qualms about going on an expensive honeymoon in Brazil with Miss Ivory Coast, whom he married after controversially divorcing his first wife. Idi Amin's clownish but all the same horrifying exploits in Uganda are well known, while crowning himself emperor at a grandiose ceremony, the cruel Bokassa was perhaps satisfying his vain ego.

All these misdeeds by Africa's first presidents ended up in perpetuating neo-colonialism and over reliance on the west. But despite the fact that most of them are out power due to either death, retirement or political changes, their successors have fared no better and Africa is still very much in the arena searching.

Source: Marmar, Suguta, Commentary published on *The Standard* November 1996, p.16

### **Sustainable Development: In search of a conceptual framework**

The concept of sustainable development became increasingly popularized in the late 1970s as a central element in debate on economic development as a reaction to the 1960s mainstream trickle down development approaches. Surfacing a decade ago in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the idea of sustainable development began as an approach to maintain or enhance resource productivity, secure ownership of and access to assets, resources and income-earning activities as well as to ensure adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs (Johnson, 1997). This had been prompted by the Great Horn of Africa Famine of 1984 which had provided dramatic evidence of how natural phenomena combined with unsustainable human practices can turn lands that have been farmed for generations into unproductive wastelands hence jeopardizing source of livelihoods for many a people. (Carney, 1998, Sconnes, 2000)

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Rio de Janeiro, 14 June, 1992 observed that States have, in accordance with principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources in order to eradicate poverty and to decrease the disparities in standards of living of the majority of the people of the world so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. (UNDP, 1992)

Thus sustainable development was born and taken to mean a “development strategy that manages resources so that they provide for the needs of today while ensuring resources for tomorrow”. Ironically, majority of economies of sub-Saharan Africa who depend largely on the natural resources endowments theirs is a systematic vicious cycle of poverty in which the day by day struggle to meet their basic survival needs drives them to undermine or destroy the very resources on which their survival and well-being depend (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

Given Sub-Saharan Africa’s comparative advantage in natural resource endowment, her future economic growth for the next generation depends on how well the

environment and natural resources are managed and used today. Evidence already suggests that poor governance measures like state-sanctioned grabbing and encroachment on forests and water catchments areas has put significant stress on its environment and natural resource base. Furthermore, illegal and harmful practices like use of poison and deep-water trawling are threatening the sustainability of the high-foreign exchange earning fish resource in the world's second largest fresh water body, Lake Victoria. (UNEP, 2003, p. ix)

Four decades dealing with evidence of “disordered faults of progress” (Cowen and Shenton, 1996, quoted in Allan and Thomas, 2000) have led stakeholders to reassess the subject “development” after realising that the gains of development are not equally spread among and within nations and that crushing weight of abject poverty characterises the vast majority of the third world.

Contemporary development thinking is therefore redefining development beyond mere amelioration of material inadequacies, to equipping people and institutions with the means and skills to achieve development in a long-term basis. Thus, the sustainable development concept has evolved from three decades of changing perspectives on ‘development’ hence becoming increasingly popular in development thinking. (UNDP, 1992)

### **Challenges for Governance and Sustainable development**

Despite the decorative sentences, sustainable development and poverty eradication are seen in many national development plans in Africa narrowly in terms of income or consumption flows. Such approach neglects the social and political aspects like low nutrition and health, lack of education and access to services, social vulnerability and political powerlessness. Sustainable development needs therefore to be recognised as a political process, which cannot be delivered as a technocratic solution from above on a passive population.



**Slums are a physical and spatial manifestation of urban poverty:**



**Kibera slums, Nairobi, Kenya home to over 600,000 low-income earners is by far the largest slum dwellings in East and Central Africa, Photo courtesy of AMREF**

The promotion of good governance thus constitutes an important focus and essential ingredient for the socioeconomic transformation of Africa. Good governance is a fundamental building block of a just and economically prosperous society and, therefore, is an essential component of action to ensure sustainable development. There is an urgent need for enhanced functional democratic governance across the African continent as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Many re-known authorities on Africa's development have argued that a "crisis of governance" underlay the "litany of Africa's development problems" and good governance, which was meant as "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs" is to become the "magin



world”, pluralistic institutional structure” (World Bank, 1989: 60). This is to say, good governance should promote a legal framework for development, capacity building and civil society which is linked to the fostering of accountability, legitimacy, transparency and participation.

The NEPAD policy on sustainable development adopted at the first African Union Conference of Planning Ministers held in Tripoli in April 2003 and by the African Union in Maputo in July 2003 reiterates that poverty can only be effectively tackled through the promotion of democracy good governance, peace and security, the development of human and physical resources; gender equality; openness to international trade and investment; allocation of appropriate funds to social sector and ; new partnerships between governments and the private sector, and with civil society. (AU, 2003)

### **Governance Reforms**

The structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s provided only a partial solution to the problems of political and economic mismanagement across the developing world. They promoted reforms that tended to remove serious price distortions, but gave inadequate attention to the provision of social services. Consequently, only a few countries managed to achieve sustainable higher growth under these programmes. Indeed, Africa’s experience shows that the rate of accumulation in the post-colonial period has not been sufficient to rebuild societies in the wake of colonial underdevelopment, or to sustain improvement in the standard of living. This has had deleterious consequences on the political process and led to sustained patronage and corruption. The net effect of these processes has been the entrenchment of a vicious cycle, in which economic decline, reduced capacity and poor governance reinforce each other, thereby confirming Africa’s peripheral and diminishing role in the world economy.

In Africa very few clearly democratic transitions exist. Many of these processes are in the twilight zone, in the grey world between democracy and dictatorship. Unfortunately, even with the return to political pluralism in the 1990s, respect for fundamental human

rights and free and fair elections, the politics of imposition of control and direction from the top, rather than mobilisation of support from below, has not taken place. The rolling back of the state from its traditional functions following the neo-liberalism of the late 1980s implies changed relationship between the state, civil society and the private sector. This makes it more important for an interface between the State and civil society to jointly work for sustainable development and improved quality of living standards for all.

Rewriting Africa's social contract to sustainable development requires reforming the state system. What Africa needs according to Mkandawire (2000), is a system of democratic governance in which political actors have space to freely and openly debate, negotiate and design an economic reform package that is integral to the construction of a new social contract for ushering Africa into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Role of Non-State institutions in Sustainable Development and Good Governance**

In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War and the "triumph of capitalism", two widespread and dangerous myths about the global economy have risen to the status of conventional wisdom. The first one is that according to the still relatively diffused, although on the decline, neo-liberal thinking, a strong and powerful state leads to allocative inefficiency, and thus its functions should be reduced in favour of private, in other words, non-state actors. The second is the notion that well being and democracy are promoted by decentralising state functions, fostering civil society and giving power to local communities. Most policies and processes supported recently, such as macro-economic reforms, privatisation and market liberalisation, the advent of new democratic regimes and decentralisation reforms, have had the effect of reducing governments' roles. Private economic actors, political parties, civil society organisations, local governments, and decentralised communities have all been involved in these changes.

However the contraction and modifications in the state's role represent a source of considerable anxiety for many people, be they intellectuals or lay people. Although in

theory, current processes open up opportunities for groups and individuals to assume directly some roles and do better than the state itself, the preoccupation is that the vacuum left by the state cannot be properly filled by any national actor, due to weak institutional capacity. (World Bank, 1997)

## **Role of Non-State institutions**

### **I) Trade Unions**

Trade unions are the cornerstones of any effective system. Trade Unions give workers collective voice and enhance productivity and equality. They limit employer behaviour that is arbitrary, exploitative or retaliatory.

They have a non-economic role as well. Some unions have contributed significantly to their countries political and social development. Collective struggle against the state by oppressed and exploited workers and peasants have resulted into development and improved governance. By combining power of defence and resistance to the power of bourgeoisie landlords and the legal, political and ideological forces as well as structures that support them, trade unions develop ideologies and forms of organizations and solidarity that challenge existing forms of exploitation, oppression, misrule and point the way beyond them to alternative forms of equality and prosperity in the society.

All pluralistic societies consider freedom of association and organisation a basic human right, and organised labour is often the vanguard of movement toward greater political openness and democracy:

- Polish workers struggle for freedom in the 1980s was a dramatic reminder that the free labour unions are mostly democratic institutions. Solidarity leaders believed that pluralistic labour unions could be the catalyst for a pluralistic political system and that free trade unions were a prerequisite for free society.

- South Africa's black labour unions gave powerless people a chance to make their voices heard. The black union movement became leader in the struggle against apartheid

## **Box 2 Unions and Politics**

### **Tom Mboya....Kenya**

In 1952 Tom Mboya founded the Kenya Local Government Workers Union, KLGWU and stepped into the politics by accepting the post of treasurer in Kenyatta's party, the Kenya African Union (KAU), and taking effective control of nationalist opposition to British rule. He became a prominent figure in Kenyan politics - organising protests against mass removals, detention camps, and secret trials. He was a rising star in the Kenyan political landscape and his contribution to the independence struggle and post independent era was remarkable. In 1957 Mboya formed the People's Convention Party and was elected to join the colony's legislative council (Legco) as one of only eight African members. He was later instrumental in forming the Kenya African National Union (KANU), becoming its first Secretary General when it was founded in 1960. When Kenya attained self-government rule on June 1st 1963, Tom Mboya became the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, a position he was able to utilise in shaping a future independent Kenya. In December 1964, Kenya became a Republic, with Mboya being appointed the Minister of Economic Planning and Development. He was later instrumental in putting together the famous Sessional Paper No.10: "African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya", which continued to be the 'guiding philosophy of the KANU government decades after Mboya'.

### **Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba...Zambia**

He joined the National Union of Building, Engineering and General Workers (NUBEGW) rising through the ranks to the post of chairman of the union. He went on to win the chairmanship of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). In 1990, he helped form the Movement for Multiparty Democracy, a party that, with Chiluba as its presidential candidate, went on to successfully challenge Kaunda's rule in the 1991 elections. Chiluba took office on November 2 of that year. He won re-election to a second five-year term in 1996 despite a lawsuit questioning his birthplace and hence his eligibility for the post.

### **Lech Walesa...Poland**

Lech Walesa shaped the 20th century as the leader of the Solidarity movement that led the Poles out of communism. It is one of history's great ironies that the nearest thing we have ever seen to a genuine workers' revolution was directed against a so-called workers' state. Poland was again the icebreaker for the rest of Central Europe in the "velvet revolutions" of 1989. Walesa's was shocked by the repression of workers' protests in the 1970s and made contact with small opposition groups. He moved his fellow workers away from mere wage claims and toward a central, daringly political demand: free trade unions. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. Walesa became the first democratically-elected president of Poland in 1990. He was elected Poland's first noncommunist President, a post he held until 1995. He is an example of someone who was magnificent in the struggle for freedom but less so in more normal times, when freedom was won and the task was to consolidate a stable, law-abiding democracy. Without Walesa, the occupation strike in the Lenin Shipyard might never have taken off. Without him, Solidarity might never have been born. Without him, it might not have survived martial law and come back triumphantly to negotiate the transition from communism to democracy. And without the Polish icebreaking, Eastern Europe might still be frozen in a Soviet sphere of influence, and the world would be a very different place. With all Walesa's personal faults, his legacy is a huge gain in freedom, not just for the Poles.

Source: Time International...Person of the Year Series, Time Magazine,

## **Faith-based Institutions**

Values are the key to evolution of a sustainable society not only because they influence behaviour but also because they determine a society's priorities and thus its ability to survive. As a source and custodian of values, religion institutions should be centrally involved in the transition to a sustainable society. Yet surprisingly, few religious leaders have grasped the opportunities and responsibilities.

Only when man is seen as an "integral part of the natural world, hence inseparable from its governing process and laws will 'a sense of the total community of man and responsibility for the fate of the planet' mesh with self interest of fellow man and of future generations"

Some of the most profound thinking on theological implication of sustainable development in the Christian world is set forth in the biblical legacy of the book of Genesis. These have been interpreted as a licence to exploit and pillage the earth's resources to serve society's interest:

*"That man was to have dominion over fish of the sea,  
and over birds of the air and over everything that  
moves upon the earth"*

There is a need therefore to develop new ethical principles, a goal that will involve religious institutions as a move towards sustainable development. At issue is the faith-institutions role in governance and willingness to face squarely the need to incorporate into their doctrines the imperatives and ethics of ecology and sustainability.

Perils of nuclear armament, the persistence of hunger, the need for simpler non-consumerist lifestyles, creative simplicity based upon being and becoming and not having, the threat of overpopulation, the rationale of land distribution, the need for recycling raw materials, outlining the dangers of soil erosion, and the need for social reform all should be addressed from the pulpit.

**Box 3 Church and Politics****The Catholic Church and the People's Power Revolution of the Philippines**

The People's movement, which bore fruit in the ouster of Marcos on February 25, 1986, encompassed members of the Roman Catholic Church plus millions of rural, working-class, middle-class, and professional supporters.

The Catholic Church was the country's strongest and most independent nongovernmental institution. One of the best-known politicized clergy was Cardinal Sin, The archbishop of Manila and an astute negotiator. He together with Father Conrado Balweg and a prominent Catholic layman, José Concepcion who broadcasting over the Catholic-run Radio Veritas (which became the voice of the revolution), appealed to the people who encouraged the Philippine hierarchy to criticize the Marcos regime's abuses.

They urged use non-violence to block pro-Marcos troop movements. Hundreds of thousands responded. In the tense days that followed, priests, nuns, ordinary citizens, and children linked arms with the rebels and faced down, without violence, the tanks and machine guns of government troops. An almost bloodless revolution brought Corazon Aquino into office as the seventh president of the Republic of the Philippines.

The Catholic Church has played an important role. More than three-quarters of the population is Catholic and the church has had a large influence. Before the revolution, it was a major power with some credibility among the people. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has a network of thousands of parish churches all over the country. Its pastoral letters had become more and more critical towards the dictatorship and urged non-violence and passive resistance. During the People's Power Revolution, the church was in the forefront, gathering the people, calling for non-violent resistance, and, at the same time, trying to avoid a bloodbath.

Source: Time Magazine special Commemorative issue of the life and times of John Paul the II, April 2005

**Civil Society Organizations and NGOs**

The debate on the role of the NGOs in the development discourse of the developing and transitional economies has for of late been a subject of rigorously heated debate. Views and opinions range from quasi-denial of NGO effectiveness to hyperbolic exaggerations. The now frequently asked questions among development practitioners and academia is what are the possibilities and limitations of non-governmental organizations as development agencies?

Studies have made apparent show that the expansion of the NGO sector is not likely to be attributed to a sudden expansion of interest in charity work, or of an outbreak of solidarity with the poor. It may be largely connected with the decline of the state as an institution, and the emergence of various kinds of agencies which have taken over its former roles. In the course of the 1980s, the obvious failures of many state-led schemes was emphasized (perhaps exaggerated) which followed in to many NGOs being placed in a central position as components of civil society.



NGOs are said to work very closely with the poor thus reaching the most marginalized people. With this sort of grassroots connection, they are able to articulate grassroots reality much better than the government with its macro-development approach. Unlike central government that uses the 'top down' strategy in their development approach, NGOs use the 'bottom up' strategy that takes into consideration the needs of the poor and improves their living conditions. This bottom up approach gives the poor the necessary experience and ability to gain control of their lives thus strengthens their institutions and facilitates capacity building.

### **Advocacy and the Reform agenda**

These groups have emerged as the engine during process of social change, local or global, single-issue or multi-issue; have emerged to fill the gap left between the government and profit-making private sector. These organisations began as charitable relief or missionary welfare organizations. They have typically moved on to the promotion of small scale self-reliance and then to a 'third generation strategy' of 'sustainable systems of development'

In the 1980s and 90s when multi-party competition was still a novelty in a number countries, NGOs and other civic groups served as the only reform advocates. According to Kiliko, (2004), indigenous Kenyan NGOs for instance, have undoubtedly influenced the advocacy and democratisation process in this country. Measured against its institutional and human capacity-building objectives, they've had very high success record. Although outsiders may have influenced the priority given to various reform agenda issues, it's nevertheless clear that most of the reform agenda implemented in this country over the past 15 years has been developed internally. (ibid)

There is an implicit acceptance that wherever an association works for local service delivery (health, education, rural development, technical expertise), it is bound to benefit the poor. Unfortunately, it is the case that many NGOs across the African continent find their reason of existence in strategic or political motives, whereas others, even if more honestly established, carry out very few activities in favour of the poorest. Moreover,

NGOs are admittedly not always capable interlocutors for policy-makers, given their low institutional and financial capacity, which forces them to operate within a narrow and short-term horizon. This is not just a matter for the NGOs (which are on their part trying to make up for their own gaps), but for the government itself, which should regard the fostering of NGO institutional capacity as an integral part of its commitment to good governance and sustainable development. It is therefore necessary to build strong capacity of and involve in planning and administration, for example interest groups, women clubs, credit unions, labour unions, co-operatives.

Grassroots organisations had been traditionally successful in the field of local resource mobilisation and have been increasingly relied upon by governments across the African continent as partners in local rural programmes aimed to protect the environment for rural development, (Chambers and Conway, 1992). However, in spite of the enormous amount of hype that is generated by some NGOs and their supporters about 'making a difference' and 'empowering' the poor, and the fact that NGOS can obviously achieve a great deal in certain situations, Kiliko, (2004) concludes that they are never going to change the world.

### **Repositioning Institutions for the challenges of sustainable development and good governance**

The key challenge is not only to understand the complex and multidirectional links among the various dimensions of and institutions for development and governance, but also to identify the extent to which, and ways in which, these can be reinforced and through what appropriate strategies and policies. Indeed, one of the key concerns of development theory and research has been to understand how policies and programs can be designed to address both persistent and newly emerging development problems.

The role of institutions in the transition to sustainable development and good governance is of more than passing interest. There is need to understand the

relationships among the different actors addressing sustainable development. This requires that policy formulation and analysis divisions of government ministries and of civil society organisations be repositioned for their new emerging role. By repositioning we mean organizing policy seminars focussing on sustainable development challenges and priorities, the capacities needed to meet the challenges and implement sustainable development programmes (or projects), and governance reform measures to undertake in support of sustainable development efforts. Besides policy seminars and scenario building, research and training institutions should provide the necessary technical and advisory services on the design and implementation of sustainable development strategies.

Whereas leadership is a decisive factor in development, it will not impact positively and significantly on the sustainable development process until key governance institutions - the executive, the legislative, and judicial branches of government, political parties, civic and non-governmental organizations - are in place and functioning properly. Thresholds such as governance may become hurdles blocking dynamics needed to break out of poverty trap, and thus preventing the transition to sustainable development. Thresholds such as governance may become hurdles blocking dynamics needed to break out of poverty trap, and thus preventing the transition to sustainable development. The legislature for instance should pass the appropriate sustainable development measures into law, (like the Kenya parliament did on the Forest bill into law.

In reaction to pressure from the donors, many countries across the African continent have in place institutions and mechanisms designed to contain and reverse malpractices in the governance process that over the years had emerged as rampant corruption in the body politic. (See Oyugi 2005).

A few of these cases of institutions include: Kenya Anti-corruption Commission; anti corruption programme initiated in 1994, followed by the establishment of the office of the Inspector General in Uganda; Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime established in 1994 in Botswana, Creation of Office of Inspector general of Government

in Cote d' Ivoire; Creation of the institution of Ombudsman and the setting up of an Anti-corruption Tribunal I 1996, and the enactment of a code of ethics to promote responsible behaviour within the service as well as the establishment of public complaints bureau in Mauritius. This policy shift is reinforced by the NEPAD agenda which seeks to pursue just, honest, transparent, accountable and participatory government and probity in public life. It promises to combat and eradicate corruption, which both retards economic development and undermines the moral fabric of society.

#### **Box 4 Governance Measures by Government of Kenya: A Case Study**

Since mid-1999, the Kenyan Government has identified and implemented an extensive set of measures in the area of governance as part of a systematic approach to address the problem mismanagement of public resources if not outright involvement in corrupt practices as a strategy of self and/or group enrichment. The approach has focused on:

- (i) Enhancing accountability and transparency;
- (ii) Strengthening oversight bodies;
- (iii) Strengthening budget planning and execution;
- (iv) Changing the incentive mechanisms faced by potential participants in corruption; and
- (v) Removing rent-seeking opportunities.

Furthermore, in March 2000, cabinet adopted a significant list of measures covering all the areas mentioned above and a concrete timetable of implementation. Some of the main elements of the governance improvement program are highlighted below.

A sustained drive against corruption in all parts and at all levels of the public sector should be carried out by the Government, the Anti-Corruption Authorities and the police. A policy of 'zero tolerance' of any corruption should be adopted. To facilitate the direct fight against corruption, anti-corruption bodies should be protected by an act of parliamentary. Their independence should be protected and the resources provided to enable them to undertake active investigations and timely prosecution. As well as pursuing cases of corruption, present and past, they should develop and promote a prevention-orientated strategy to deter future occurrence. Other measures will include: introducing a system of monitoring performance of public servants, strengthening the Efficiency Monitoring Unit, and, establishing a permanent complaints office for members of the public to report any excessive abuse of power by public officials.

A Code of Ethics for all public office holders and working out the modalities should be enacted and worked out. This is important to regulate civil servants in business undertaking so that all public office holders will avoid any conflict of interest between their public duties and private business and will be barred from any Government affairs which touch on such conflict of interest.

*Source:* Economic Recovery Strategy Paper, Ministry of Economic Planning and National Development, Government of Kenya, 2003

### **Participatory approach to development and governance**

As part of the intervention strategies in good governance and sustainable development programmes, there has been considerable interest on the issue of participation and its

importance in governance and development programmes. Participation increases the likelihood of attaining the project objectives and its sustainability as well as promoting a more equal distribution of projects benefits to the beneficiaries/poor. CIDA (1986)

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) reiterated that people should be at the centre of development; development should involve people. A decade later, notions such as grass-root participation in development, state-society partnership, and delegation of state roles to communities have come back with a renewed force. These debates are surfacing in Kenya through various initiatives, such as the promotion of national processes of consultation to address crucial problems (a 'people-driven' constitutional review, anti-corruption crusades, poverty, hunger etc.)

Both the state and non-state actors have increasingly come to recognize the need to put people at the centre of development and to give development a human face. They have begun to advocate strategies to explicitly address social-development needs from a participatory framework.

### **Multi-Sectoral partnership for Good Governance and Sustainable Development**

The concept of partnership between state and non-state actors is thus at the core of sustainable development strategies. It is important to bring all the development partners strategies into poverty eradication and sustainable development. However, the strategies will only be successful in achieving sustainable development if all stakeholders ranging from the government and donors to the NGOs, private sector and the poor, vigorously implement them.

The partnership between state and other non-state development partners should be strengthened. This will enable them to establish effective forums to understand each other thereby enhancing communication between civil society organisations themselves, the government and other partners. This can be made possible by having effective formal structure and process through which the development partners involves and seeks each others views on how to address the challenges of good governance

and sustainable development. This will ensure the formulation of good and sustainable strategies to effectively tackle poverty and achieve sustainable development.

Government and civil society bring potentially complementary skills and resources to the picture. However, they need to establish a common agenda and practical working relationships. Over-stretched staff on both sides, bureaucratic delays, changes in national priorities, or ignorance of government priorities and resource allocation decisions are, but a few of the issues that must be tackled. A partnership must be fostered that is less asymmetrical and more substantive, centred on home-grown, pro-poor development strategies.

It is also essential that state bureaucracies and civil society organizations begin to forge broad coalitions dedicated to legitimate sustainable development and good governance pursuits and to the total banishment of material deprivation of the African peoples.

The regional economic communities – COMESA, EAC, SADC, ECOWAS - remain the building blocks for Africa's economic integration. They should be strengthened in every way practicable by every African country to build on a promising foundation, working with our development partners and the wider international community to:

- . forge new forms of international co-operation in which the benefits of globalisation are more evenly shared;
- . create a stable international economic environment in which African countries can achieve growth through greater market access for their exports; the removal of trade barriers, especially non-tariff barriers and other forms of protectionism; increased flows of direct foreign investment; debt cancellation; a meaningful increase in ODA; and the diversification of their economies.

### **Promoting and Implementing Good Governance and Sustainable development: A summation**

There can be no doubt however that despite the poverty, inequities in the distribution of the benefits of development, and wide-scale social exclusion or marginalization, Africa



has over the years also witnessed profound positive changes in the conditions of life, and economic growth has been instrumental in enhancing their peoples welfare. However, history also confirms that the relationship between economic growth and human and social development is neither unilinear nor automatic. The negative environmental and health impacts of unrestrained material progress are amply established. The annual reports of the World Economic Forum, Gupte (1998) clearly indicate how the disruptive social, cultural, and political consequences of rapid economic growth have led to several problems, such as massive dislocations of populations, political upheavals, new health risks, crime, violence, and civil wars in various parts of the world. Technological and economic progress have also been instrumental in accelerating the cross-border transport of many development problems, such as drugs, crime, pandemics, and violence, thereby creating new security threats that supersede national borders.

Monitoring and evaluation is necessary to provide a rational basis for the review of performance and the degree of realisation of good governance and sustainable development objectives. The African Peer Review Mechanism, (NEPAD, 2002) was agreed on the basis of voluntary accession determined to evaluate and assess Africa's efforts in restoring stability, peace and security in the African continent. Other included are efforts and initiatives directed at seeking speedy peaceful solutions to current conflicts and at building Africa's capacity to prevent, manage and resolve all conflicts on the continent as these are essential conditions for sustainable development, alongside democracy, good governance, human rights, social development, protection of environment and sound economic management.

As the experience of the last 50 years shows, higher levels of economic growth do not necessarily translate into increased social well-being or the eradication of extreme poverty for hundreds of millions of people excluded from development. In short, economic growth is no longer equated with development. Instead, in the closing years of the 20th century, it is accepted that development has multiple dimensions, encompassing human security, macroeconomic growth, environmental sustainability,

and participatory governance. In the words of former UNDP's administrator, James Gustav Speth, since the annual issues of the *Human Development Report* began to be published in 1990 they have been instrumental in "ending the mismeasure of human progress by economic growth alone" (UNDP 1996, p. iii).

The conceptual conclusion of this paper is the position that social economic development and reduced prevalence of poverty in the African continent are unlikely to be realised unless decision makers across the continent have put in place mechanisms for good governance. In this context, good governance should ensure that political,

**Protecting the environment in which we live is an integral part of the equation in meeting the challenge of sustainable development and good governance.**



**A dilapidated pit-latrine emptying its waste on a stream which is used as a playing ground for children downstream. Laini Saba village, Kibera slums, Nairobi.  
Photo: By Author, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in the society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision making over the allocation of development resources.

Protecting the environment today (less intensive use of land) may result in slower short-term economic growth but ultimately ensure a more sustainable growth process and higher long-term growth. Failure by African governments to address environmental degradation is therefore a failure to address a fundamental market failure and could jeopardize future growth. To successfully sustain development over a long term, equitable patterns of economic growth that translate the benefits of the economic expansion into the lives of the average person must be pursued. This combines the ideas of justice and equal opportunity, equity between sexes, equity for future generations through protecting the environment in which they must live, of people coming out poverty to share in the world's bounty, of becoming integral members of the society. The script for human development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is still unwritten. It will begin to be written by the choices we make today. We should not let it be said of our time that we, who had the power to do better, allowed the world to get worse. Human destiny, after all is not a matter of chance, but of choice.

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